

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS UNN

AMEMBASSY BERN

AMEMBASSY HELSINKI

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY OSLO

AMEMBASSY PRAGUE

AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK

AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

AMEMBASSY VALLETTA

AMEMBASSY VIENNA

USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

C O N F I D E N T I A L LUXEMBOURG 1075

1. MEETING IN BRUSSELS ON DECEMBER 12, THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
OF THE EUROPEAN CONFEDERATION OF LABOR UNIONS (CONFEDERATION
EUROPEENNE DES SYNDICATS--CES) CONFIRMED ITS SUPPORT FOR
LUXEMBOURG TRADE UNIONIST MATHIAS HINTERSCHEID TO SUCCEED
THEO RASSCHAERT OF BELGIUM AS SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE UMBRELLA
ORGANIZATION OF EUROPEAN LABOR MOVEMENTS. HINTERSCHEID,
SECRETARY-GENERAL OF LUXEMBOURG'S CGT AND PRESIDENT OF ITS
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LARGEST LABOR UNION, THE SOCIALIST-ORIENTED LAV (LETZEBURGER
ARBECHTER VERBAND), WAS PROPOSED BY A MAJORITY OF THE UNIONS

REPRESENTED IN THE CES AND ELECTED UNANIMOUSLY.

2. IT REMAINS FOR HINTERSCHEID TO BE CONFIRMED AT THE CONFEDERATION'S ANNUAL CONGRESS, WHICH WILL TAKE PLACE IN APRIL. SHOULD THE CONGRESS VOTE AS EXPECTED TO CONFIRM THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE'S RECOMMENDATION, HINTERSCHEID (WHO SINCE 1969 HAS BEEN A MEMBER OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE) WILL STEP FORMALLY INTO THE POST.

3. MATHIAS HINTERSCHEID, BORN JANUARY 26, 1931 IN THE SMALL LUXEMBOURG STEEL-PRODUCING TOWN OF DUDELANGE, IS A THOROUGHGOING SYNDICALIST AND WORKINGMAN WHO CAME UP THROUGH THE RANKS OF THE LABOR MOVEMENT THROUGH DRIVE AND PRACTICAL ABILITY RATHER THAN FORMAL EDUCATION. TRAINED AS A STEEL ADJUSTER AT THE STATE-RUN ECOLE PROFESSIONELLE IN ESCH-SUR-ALZETTE, HE ENTERED THE GIANT ARBED STEEL WORKS AT AN EARLY AGE AND QUICKLY BECAME INVOLVED IN THE ACTIVITIES OF THE SOCIALIST-DOMINATED LAV LABOR UNION.

4. HINTERSCHEID'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE SOCIALIST PARTY HAS BEEN CLOSE BUT SUSPICIOUS AND STORMY. HEAVILY INFLUENCED, LIKE MANY OF HIS FELLOW LABOR LEADERS, BY A KIND OF SIMPLISTIC SYNTHESIS OF CLASSICAL MARXIST AND SORELIAN SYNDICALIST IDEAS, HE TENDS TO EXPLAIN ALL HISTORICAL EVENTS IN TERMS OF CLASS AND ECONOMIC FORCES. HOWEVER, HE NEVER BECAME EITHER A DOCTRINAIRE SOCIALIST OR AN UNCRITICAL SUPPORTER (RATHER THAN MERELY A CLOSE POLITICAL ALLY) OF THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF LUXEMBOURG (POSL). THOUGH HE BECAME VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE POSL IN 1966, HE REMAINED ESSENTIALLY A SPOKESMAN FOR LABOR INTERESTS, NARROWLY COMMITTED TO BREAD-AND-BUTTER ISSUES INVOLVING WAGE AND RIGHTS INCREASES, AND CAREFULLY DISTANCED HIMSELF FROM THE POSL POSITION ON SOME ISSUES. IN MARCH 1969 THESE CONFLICTS CAME TO A HEAD AT AN EXTRAORDINARY CONGRESS OF THE POSL WHERE HINTERSCHEID RESIGNED HIS OFFICE IN PROTEST AGAINST WHAT HE SAW AS A DOWNPLAYING OF THE PARTY'S SYNDICALIST FACTION.

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5. SHORT, DARK AND OVERWEIGHT, DIRECT AND UNSOPHISTICATED, HINTERSCHEID IS A JOVIAL, RELAXED MAN WHO GETS ALONG WELL WITH COLLEAGUES AND IS POPULAR WITH THE RANK AND FILE. THOUGH HE COULD NOT BE CONSIDERED PARTICULARLY PRO-AMERICAN, HE VISITED THE US IN OCTOBER 1966 AS AN INTERNATIONAL VISITOR GRANTEE AND REPORTEDLY RETURNED WITH A CONSIDERABLY MORE SOPHISTICATED AND SYMPATHETIC UNDERSTANDING OF US SOCIETY AND POLICIES. INVITED FOR SIMILAR VISITS TO THE SOVIET UNION AND

CHINA, HINTERSCHIED IS BELIEVED BY HIS COLLEAGUES TO
BE A STOLID, PRAGMATIC UNION MAN NOT EASILY INFLUENCED
BY POLITICAL COURTSHIP.

6. SINCE THE EARLY 1970'S HINTERSCHIED HAS SERVED AS
PRESIDENT OF THE LAV AND SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE LUXEM-
BOURG GENERAL CONFEDERATION OF LABOR (CGT), BUT HAS HELD
NO FURTHER POSL POSTS. HE WAS ELECTED TO THE EXECUTIVE
COMMITTEE OF THE CES IN THE SAME MEETING WHICH ELECTED
RASSCHAERT SECRETARY-GENERAL IN APRIL 1969. IF CONFIRMED
AS THE NEW SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE CES, HE CAN BE
EXPECTED TO PLAY AN EFFECTIVE ROLE IN ADVANCING LABOR'S
INTERESTS BUT IS UNLIKELY TO ESPOUSE POSITIONS BLATANTLY
MOTIVATED BY ANY DOCTRINAIRE IDEOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS.
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